DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 800 CS 215 043

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TITLE Suspicions of Theory, Suspicious Theories: The Graduate Student Literacy Narrative of Theory.
PUB DATE Mar 95
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (46th, Washington, DC, March 23-25, 1995).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *English Departments; *Graduate Students; Graduate Study; Higher Education; *Intellectual Development; Literacy; *Literary Criticism; Student Interests
IDENTIFIERS Academic Discourse Communities; *Literary Theory; *Theoretical Orientation

ABSTRACT

The violence of any literacy acquisition in the contact zone between the powered, the disempowered, and the empowered is never clearcut. But, nevertheless, calls to theory literacy from the late 70s and early 80s have been answered with a rush. Michael Berube writes that "graduate school in English seems to have a very bad effect on people who don't like theory." Some of the more obvious symptoms of the academic endorsement of this literacy as a functional requirement for citizenship are the plethora of new theory anthologies for graduate and undergraduate students. Also, consider the range of references to literacy theory appearing in locations of popular Culture from "Mademoiselle" magazine to "Northern Exposure." Graduate student responses to this theory, on the other hand, demonstrate much in the way of anxiety, failure, fracture, and little in the way of the kind of liberation and empowerment that a functional literacy promises. So should the profession abandon teaching theory literacy altogether? Graduate school is the ultimate transitory period. Either the student fails in some way to become a citizen, by rejection of theory, the Bartleby "preferring not to" write theory, or the student becomes a citizen. Theory choices and adhesions in the civil society of the academy are the space of enactment, the building of multiple articulations through culture. (TB)

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Presentation to CCCC 1995
Washington, DC

ED 387 800

"Suspicions of Theory, Suspicious Theories:
The Graduate Student Literacy Narrative of Theory"

My talk turns to a different type of literacy narrative, but one that I'll argue is not disconnected from these ideas of resistance and participation in the polis. . . my Bartlebys are us, the participants in the academic reading and production of texts and the literacy narrative is the literacy narrative of "theory" for graduate students in literary, rhetorical and composition studies.

I'm here with one of my own Doctors Frankenstein, Peter Mortensen, who built some of my literacy of this little thing called theory at University of Kentucky. And so, I want to state from the outset that my suspicions of this literacy of theory are situated within a body that has accepted the transplant, and acquired theory, and wants to raise questions about it from an unabashedly political and theoretical perspective.

As Michael Bérubé tells us in his own literacy narrative of theory in "Discipline and Theory," "graduate school in English seems to have a very bad effect on people who don't like theory" (46). So I want to use the literacy of theory to examine the academice dialect of theory, and raise questions about the particularities of this "bad effect," and who specifically suffers it and how, because as Mortensen and Eldred point out in "Reading Literacy Narratives": in talking about Eliza Doolittle's acquisition of the dialect of Professor Henry Higgins, " when we read for literacy narratives, we study how the text constructs a character's ongoing social process of language acquisition." (512).

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Graduate school in English, which I'm heartily enjoying, nonetheless often to me seems like nothing so much as a velvet contact zone, where students clash and articulate their own subjectivities and the interests of their respective departments as they acquire their individual "theory" of study. Yet theory clusters may be approaching the level of codification demonstrated by E.D. Hirsch's list of essential "cultural literacies." And as many literacy theorists, including Elspeth-Stuckey and Harvey Graff point out, the violence of any literacy acqusition in this contact zone between the powered, the disempowered, and the empowered is never as clear-cut as Hegel would have us believe. Where, then, is the space in these clusters for graduate students who fall between theories, while trying to embrace on of their own? What's a Southern, feminist, poststructuralist, materialist, third-sophistic graduate student to do? Or, as Mortensen and Eldred pointedly ask: "What happens to Eliza, after all, if the gambler loses, if education does not deliver her into the promised land?" (514).

We might call this the southern grad student looks at Stanley Fish's "Unbearable Ugliness of Volvos" or the anthracite archaeology of hillbilly hegemony, or something. I'm going to tell some stories, and throw some theory, and hopefully we'll emerge into a question period where we can discuss the ways that theory literacy is happening in rhetoric, composition, and English literature programs in many different specific departments. In any case, this suspicion of theory all all began when....

Revert to "state of nature" - - - i.e. heavy Southern Mountains accent

I'm driving past Sheik Maktoum's Brookside Farm in Versailles, Kentucky (We say it Ver-SALES) and wondering what Said would think about the semiotics of this name so generic, so Anglo, so chosen for acres of thoroughbred raising. I'm coming from my mother's house in the capital city

of Frankfort (We say it Frank-FERT) and my thoughts wander to the points made in the lecture by radical democracy theorist Chantal Mouffe that I attended the previous Friday. **Drop the accent**

Mouffe argued that the left needed to become more comfortable with the existence of and conflicts within pluralism in order to establish a new hegemony. And I'm wondering if in some way, radical democratic theory, hasn't already established a new hegemony: one of trying to eradicate these conflicts, to impose with theory, a domination of certain people without using as a basis of domination the articulations of identity that are now, on the left, upheld and valorized. And what I mean here by "articulations of identity" are issues of race, gender, class, and region or colony.

Theory, instead may be the basis, I'm thinking, referencing back to Mouffe's discussion of the definition of self by the articulation of the Other (and though I didn't see her notes, she should have brought Spivack into the argument). Types of theory, it seems, ARE articulation themselves and thus, when we reject a particular theory, on "theoretical" grounds, we are rejecting the identity of the theorist, but oh so politely, keeping the author safely dead. In this remove, no one can cry "marginalization" - there is a mumbled "different approach." Hatred of women, African-Americans, colonial subjects and queers can be subsumed into a rejection of their theory. As one who embraces theory, I find these thoughts troubling - they are not connected to any notion of "PC", which I consider nothing more than a stupendously successful public relations campaign on the part of the right. I'm an Race Class Gender[1] hi-low aesthetics left-wing culture critic questioning the very underpinnings of my apparatus.

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[1] Race, Class, Gender

Accent again.

I realize that as I am considering Chantal Mouffe, I am driving a green '73 Chevy full-bed pickup with a 350, bored-out 30/1000s-over, 4-barrel quadrajet carbeurator, aluminum intake, 3 on the floor with a bulldog and 4WD, 1500-pound suspension lift, push bumper, CB whip antenna and 60 watts of stereo power. The signal lights do not work, but the brake lights do. **Drop the accent.** This truck is an articulation of a political subjectivity that I often feel I must trade in for the intellectual theory that claims as its goal empowerment of the drivers of Chevy trucks, that is, those whose literacies do not align with a functional literacy test, whether administered by the Bush administration or by E.D. Hirsch himself.

I want to address theoretical literacy and the violence with which it is acquired by its learners and applied by its disseminators. I want to address radical democracy theory, literary theory, and rhetorical theory and their violences, then, through my Chevy truck, and through my experiences as a Southern woman in theory's living room. My question is this: What becomes of Walter Benjamin's *flaneur* (street-reader) and the liberation of culture and identity this entity fostered through postmodernity when the reader is a woman and the street is a rural route? And what becomes of radical democracy when literacy (of theory) becomes a qualification for participation much like literacy (of English) was a qualification for liberal democracy in John Stuart Mill's thought? (Mill 37)

As I said, this body has accepted the transplant, and with it, the privileges and protections the sovereign offers to those willing to make the trade. My truck for a TAship is not such a reductive representation of a theoretical literacy when the GRE subject test in literature now features questions to which the correct response is D) Michel Foucault or B) Paul

DeMan. I'll credit some of this to the Dr. Frankenstein here, who ties a very clean suture and left a lot of living tissue intact. So, for me personally, theory is a space that can be negotiated through telling theoretical stories, or narratizing subjectivities and combustion engines.

But, I think those engaged both as the in the enterprise of graduate education in textual studies need to consider the ways that theoretical literacy is deployed, opposed, resisted, and overadopted, to borrow a system from Henri Giroux's model of cultural literacy acquisition. How does the academy qualify citizenship with various theories and how do citizens in the academy construct identities, or deconstruct identities with a "functional literacy" of theory? Who resists, opposes, overadopts, and what happens to them?

So, for the remainder of the time here, I'd like to look at some statements that are representative of the ways in which theory opposition, theory resistance, and theory overadoption are played out, looking towards these statements as ways of considering the power relations between graduate students, identity, theoretical choices, and the civil society of the academy. In this, I'm hoping to move in the question period toward some discussion of the experiences of other graduate students and former graduate students with the acquisition of theory literacy.

In configuring the profession as a "polis" and "theory literacy" as a means of graduate student citizenship, it's necessary to look to a little political history of the American academy's adoption of theory in literary and rhetorical studies. The handout outlines some of the statements or "Calls" by sovereign leaders in the field to theory literacy as well as some "Responses" by graduate students who are attempting to answer these calls in a variety of different voices, with differing reponses to the power relations of theory. These statements line up with a few "different approaches," Culler as a

spokesman for American deconstruction, Berlin and Lunsford for rhetoric and composition, Smith, Gates and Showalter for identity theories. But all the statements, most made in the early eighties or reflecting on the early eighties from some later period, demonstrate a theory hope, a kind of literacy myth of the functionality of theory as an place of empowerment for English studies and those who are its citizens. It is interesting that only the calls from theorists in composition and rhetoric, Berlin and Lunsford, explicitly discuss the ruptures and difficulties that student readers and writers of theory encounter.

The calls to theory literacy from the late 70s and early 80s, have, as we know, been answered with a rush. Some of the the more obvious symptoms of the academic endorsement of this literacy as a functional requirement for citizenship are the plethora of new theory anthologies for both undergraduate and graduate students, the additions of theory certificates to graduate degrees, (OK, OK, I admit it, I *have* one of these certficates). The recent change of the Journal of Advanced Composition 's name from JAC to JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory, is another indicator. These administrative symptoms primarily demonstrate the interest of those who made the first call or were graduate students with these leaders, and themselves, of course represent different positions in the theoretical contact zone: the difference in the selections by Robert Con Davis in his theory anthology Contemporary Literary Theory and the selections made by Hazard Adams in Literary Theory Since Plato, for example, demonstrates how the all encompassing term "theory," subsumes many positions.

But there are other, more subtle symptoms of the importance of theory literacy occuring in cultural places somewhat removed from official course listings. Last spring's issue of Parnassus for example, ran a poem entitled "A

Made-For-TV-Movie In Which A Couple Throws Frederic Jameson's Postmodernism, Or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism Off A Bridge and Into A River. " Last July's issue of Mademoiselle Magazine featured a centerfold spread entitled "Real Men Read Books," in which four male Ph.D. candidates from Emory University's program in theory were featured wearing glasses and Victoria's Secret silk robes, with their names, zodiac signs and theoretical approaches listed in grafics boxes next to their heads. Pick a sign, pick a system, pick a sweetie, seemed to be the message. A recent issue of the cyberculture magazine Wired featured a one-page quick hit guide to those famous French guys Barthes, Bataille, Blanchot, and Baudrillard. Tomes of theory from each 'major character' in the French theory story are summarized in one paragraph for each. And one of the fastest growing underground magazines in the U.S. is The Baffler, a journal that parodies theoretical journals, produced on stolen Mac time by University of Chicago grad students, and featuring the comical "Semoitics Mailbag," in which a fictional French guy "Theophile," answers reader questions about things like "kinky sexual praxis" in very theoretical terms." A recent Nothern Exposure featured the DJ Chris, who often cites Habermas on his radio show on the program, taking his graduate committee out to the ball field to demonstrate his theories about life and Casey at the Bat, during his graduate comprehensive exams. It seems that these "lower" cultural representations in parody of the graduate literacy narrative of theory may have something to tell us about how overdetermined this literacy acquisition for students.

The student responses, on the other hand, demonstrate much in the way of anxiety, failure, and fracture, and little in the way of the kind of liberation and empowerment that a functional literacy promises, whether the students represent an approach that embraces theory or rejects it. Lisa's

response, for example demonstrates an oppositional approach both in her own telling of another woman's narrative of theory and in her own agreement with it. Those who are oppositional to literacy, we know, as Henry Giroux and others demonstrate, often resist the powers of pedagogy and cultural norming, but pay the price in personal and often material terms. Nancy Welch, in another portion of her article "Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance and the Training of Teachers," tells the story of some of her graduate colleagues who oppose the theoretical construct of Program B, and in opposition leave the program, paying the price as they take up as clerks, for example.

This opposition to theoretical literacy, I've found, in observing a number of theory classes, seems to be one side of the multiply-stacked binaries that run through the conversation in the academy right now. Plato versus Social Construction, Elbow versus Bartholomae, Essentialist versus Performative feminisms, race, colonial and queer theories. In other words, those who oppose "theory," are often actually not opposed to theory in general, but in fact endorsing a different theory that the social constructionist view that is now dominant, the Platonic theory of the residence of truth and creativity within the individual. Lisa's insistence that I use her actual name when quoting her underscores her belief in this theory, it seems. And though I align with the social constructionist camp, this is the most disconcerting aspect of theory literacy for me.

The Platonist theory of literary criticism, that is, the narrative that there is a truth, a containable knowledge, which can be acquired through education, and its acquisition can lead to the land promised by Professor Higgins to Eliza and by Barbara Bush to J.T. Pace is aimed at the very groups the social constructionist literary myth seeks to empower. So, when a

particular, specific intellect brings the literacy narrative of Platonism in a body marked as black, or returning woman, or rural working-class to an academy that no longer endorses that theory, it is these specific bodies, who encountering the discourse of empowerment in theory, often are spun out of the very academy that would seek to empower them. Theory, or the wrong theory often disciplines those applying for citizenship in the academic community. These students are the Bartlebys of contemporary academe, by "preferring not to" socially construct themselves, they lose their position in the firm.

The binary alternative to this opposition is overadoption, a strong embrace of all theories, a quick entry into the hegemony of current power relations, not a "Falling Into Theory" as one anthology recommends, but "Jumping Headfirst Into Theory." The majority of graduate student responses on the handout represent this position, though as Michael Bérubé points out "Surely it's as anti-intellectual to embrace all of 'theory" indiscriminately as it is to dismiss it all out of hand." (47). Roger, Lee, Una, and Kevin's narratives all demonstrate the bewilderment, self-questioning and pain demonstrated by those acquiring the literacy of reading and writing and discovering perhaps that the promised land is just a story. All seek the promised land through theory, seek the "right" answer, and are suprised when this technology does not cleanly deliver in ability to socially construct themselves as intellectuals.

So should we abandon teaching theory literacy altogether? Is there a way to make theory literacy acqusition less violent for students who seek to being multiple subjectivities, which can include Platonism, into the supposedly civil society of the academy? Can we become, as bell hooks suggests in "Dialectically down with the critical program?"

For this answer, as we look to these final graduate student literacy narratives, written by two "success stories," that is Michael Berube and Nancy Welch, two people who finished the Ph.D. and are working and publishing, it seems important to look at two fairly disparate teachers: bell hooks and Henry Higgins. When we take graduate students into our first professionalization courses, and offer them social constructionism without situating it, we are seeking, like Professor Higgins modelled on Pygmalion, to make a perfect theorist out of mud. When we expect a seamless statue that never was mud, an Eliza who never was a flower seller, never was a Cockney, it seems that we are ignoring some simple facts about mud: that it is a mixture, a hybrid, a layering of dirt and rock, and dead skin, and vegetables, and Platonists. But when we allow, as bell hooks continues to recommend to us at every turn, in her every practice, to approach the power of theory with resistance, with spaces that allow the fissures of the power relations in literacy acqusition and cultural subjectivity to be foregrounded, as I hope I've done in this essay, we create hybrids/monsters/cyborgs that understand the hybridity of themselves, can sift through dead skin for a newly charged approach. With this hybridity comes an acceptance of the power relation of the theoretical apparatus in the academy, but one that is truly engaged in the constant questioning, learning, miming and performing that is that elusive "critical literacy."

We might say that a look at the grad student literacy narrative of theory is a bit self-reflexive, even for our own self-reflexive embrace. This is most likely because graduate school is the ultimate transitory period. Either the student fails in some way to become a citizen, by rejection of theory, the Bartlby "preferring not to" write theory, or by inability or refusal to read the theory informing the questions on the instruments of disciplines that are comprehensives. Or, the student becomes a citizen, and tries to, in the new

automatta of the theoretical body, forget the pain that was acquisition, like women's selective forgetting of the intensity of labor in childbirth. The theoretical purpose of this paper has been to foreground and perform some of the graduate student literacy narrative of theory for people in various points along the power flow of contemporary theoretical literacy; ostensibly to point out that the frowns on graduate students' faces are only partially due to small print and student essays and largely due to considering where and how to articulate their "theoretical" literacy as they apply for citizenship.

It all ends back in my truck:

As a Southern American woman on the border of "us" and "them" — I can read Chantal Mouffe's radical democratic theory, which would be the simple acqusition of functional theory literacy, but I live and travel theory's street as one who cannot, articulating an air-polluting, noise-polluting, fiscal identity. So even as the quintessential overadopter, I have often experienced the violence of the "universal ideals" of theory. Another little theory narrative demonstrates the way in which theory itself can be applied as the exclusionary force once reserved for markers of sex, race, gender, and colony.

I once overheard several radical democrats discussing my conference abstract, rejecting first my theoretical assertions (one who can write an abstract) and then my identity (one who cannot write an abstract).

"Kentucky? Do they even have any intellectuals in Kentucky?" said one radical democrat. "Well. . . Pitino," said the other radical democrat, to the amusement of all.

As I read this street, riding high, because 1500-lb suspension lift hoists the cab six feet off the ground, it is clear that only public intellectuals (such as the Young Benjamin Cult as featured in Mademoiselle Magazine's Real Men Read Books and Mouffe) can be acceptably radical in the new

hegemonic hierarchy of theory. First these radical democrats rejected my essentialist (American) feminist theory, then my focus on the particular. This freed them to do the real rejecting at hand: that of an unacceptable identity, articulated through my theoretical presentation of self. To these public intellectuals, I here put forth the assertion that it may in fact be more of a struggle to be radically democratic in Paris, Kentucky (We say it PEAR-IS) than in Paris, France, regardless of the time frame.

Theory choices and adhesions in the civil society of the academy, then it seems are the space of enactment, the building of multiple articulations through culture, as Iris Marion Young demonstrates in her work on the polis at large, and it seems currently the *only* space in which difference can actually be enacted. The cultural space in which radicals live is the space in which they are political. Without a resistant questioning of power relations in a theory of radical democracy, the theory is anything but democratic. A radicalism that allows difference must take into account all definitions of difference that it as a theory articulates or risk enacting a new hegemony that contradicts its own claims.

The space in which I am political is strung with CB wires, cluttered with empty Diet Coke cans, stuffed with Routledge books, and filled with blasting country music. In this Arcade, I am a feminist, post-Marxist, poststructuralist, third sophistic, Appalachina, radical democrat, and Rick Pitino is an intellectual.

Calls

Jonathan Culler

There are various possible responses to this situation, but most of those that are not simply nostalgic involve attempts to think seriously and creatively about literature in its relation to other kinds of writing and communication. Confronted with students for whom literature is simply one aspect of their culture and an aspect with which they are relatively unfamiliar, teachers need to be able to discuss literature in its relations to more familiar cultural products and in its relations to other ways of writing about human experience, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and history.

from "Literary Theory in the Graduate Program"
The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction. Cornell UP: 1981

Barbara Smith

A Black feminist approach to literature that embodies the realization that the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of Black women writers is an absolute necessity.

From "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," first published 1977.

James Berlin

In reading Foucault and Derrida in the late seventies, on the other hand, I was largely on my own since the commentaries were as difficult as the originals, and those few that were readable were often (as even I could see) wrong. Nonetheless, with the help of informal reading groups made up of colleagues and students, I persisted in my efforts to come to terms with this difficult body of thought. I was then, as now, convinced that both rhetorical studies and postmodern speculation offered strikingly convergent and remarkably compelling visions for conducting my life as a teacher and citizen. It is clear to me that rhetoric and composition studies has arrived as a serious field of study because it has taken into account the best that has been thought and said about its concerns from the past and the present, and I have found that postmodern work in historical and contemporary rhetorical theory has done much to further this effort.

From "Poststructuralism, Cultural Studies, and the Composition Classroom: Postmodern Theory in Practice. Rhetoric Review II:1, Fall 1992. 16-33.

Andrea Lunsford

Such a position leads composition studies to look well beyond its own borders and to challenge divisions between disciplines, between genres, and between media. Thus a scholar of composition may draw on anthropology, linguistic, psychology, philosophy, literary theory, neurobiology, or other disciplines in studying the creation and dissemination of written texts. The blurring of disciplinary boundaries raises a number of difficulties for graduate students and scholars in the field, however. How can any one person master the discourses of multiple fields?

From "The Nature of Composition Studies," 3-14 IN An Introduction to Composition Studies, Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate, eds. Oxford UP, 1991.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

After several active years of work applying literary theory to African and Afro-American literatures, I realized that what had early on seemed to me to be a fulfillment of my project as a would-be theorist of black literature was, in fact, only a moment in a progression. The challenge of my project, if not exactly to invent a black theory, was to locate and identify how the "black tradition" had theorized about itself.

From the Preface to The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism
Oxford UP: 1988

Frederic Jameson

Always historicize!
From The Political Unconscious:Narrative as a Socially Syumbolic Act.
Cornell UP 1981

Elaine Showalter

I suggest that the study of women's writing and female creativity, which I call 'gynocritics,' offers the most exciting prospect for a coherent feminist literary theory, and the opportunity to break away from dependency on male models in forging a criticism of our own.

-discussing her 1978 lecture "Toward a Feminist Poetics" in the Introduction to The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature & Theory. Pantheon, 1985.

Stanley Fish

It would seem at first that this account of things simply reintroduces the old objection: for isn't this an admission that there is after all a formal encoding, not perhaps of meanings, but of the directions for making them, for executing interpretive strategies? The answer is that they will only *be* directions to those who already have the interpretive strategies in the first place.

From "Interpreting the Variorum" (1980)

Frank Lentricchia

American critics might do well to look closer at the theories of Michel Foucault.
paraphrased from After the New Criticism University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Robert Scholes

The whole point of my argument is that we must open the way between the literary or verbal text and the social text in which we live. It is only by breaking the hermetic seal around the literary text — which is the heritage of modernism and New Critical exegesis that we can find our proper function as teachers once again.

from Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English. Yale UP, 1985.

Responses
(Oppositional, Overadoptive and Resistant)

Lisa Roney

My major professor and advisor to my creative thesis in the MFA program, and a most superlative teacher of writing, thinks pretty much that all theory and most criticism is pure bunkum, parasitic forms of busy-work, and he has plenty of impossibly ridiculous examples to back up his opinion, though it is clearly a minority opinion. . .Elsewhere, I have encountered more acknowledgement and humor of this odd relation between the "creative" and the "scholarly." Visiting a friend in the PhD program at the University of Mississippi, I encountered a woman who noted, with a very Southern baldness, that she and her fellow critics are "corpse-fuckers." Literature, when laid out and dissected in critical fashion, when smothered by heavy and impermeable theories, may suffocate, may lose the mystery that is its lifeblood. I agree with this for the most part. And yet, I have applied analytical methods and critical theories to pieces of literature with illuminating results as well.

"Roger"

I presented on the theory text. The embarrassing part is that I presented the book as though it were a work of fiction, complete with plot and major and minor characters. My thesis, so to speak, was that Roland Barthes seemed to play too big a role in the story, and that other figures surely must have been as influential as he was. This could have been an interesting and astute presentation if I hadn't been so naively serious about seeing the text as a fiction, as a work of art. In other word, I was still in the close reading interpretive mode when I should have been on a different planet, at least in terms of my level of experience.

"Lee"

In response to my paper on Nostromo, my professor wrote that it was well-written, but that my contention that the work was "conflicted and conflicting" about colonialism was a bit of " barbarous jargon."

"Una"

I pulled my first "theory-fake" at a department cocktail party as a new admission to the M.A. program. My beloved professor turned to me and said "I'm a Baktinian." I said "Um-hmm" and nodded knowingly.

I went home and cried. "There's something such as a Bakhtinian, and it's not in the dictionary!" I wailed. "I might have to become one!"

Two years later, I'm sitting in her theory class , arguing that not only is Bakhtin a bit contradictory on heteroglossic possibility, but that the idea of "Carnivale" is not freedom, but rape culture with a euphemistic name, and shouldn't we instead look at the important work on finalization of the subject in Speech Acts and Other Late Essays?

"Kevin"

Every time I try to bring up theory, people say "Go back to the philosophy department where you belong."

Michael Bérubé:

"When one of my younger professors praised my reading of narrative ruptures of 'desire' in William Thackeray's The History of Henry Edmond by saying I had read the novel as a profoundly self-contradictory text without falling into the usual deconstructionist traps, I appeared at her office within twenty-four hours, wanting to know *what* deconstructionist traps I had avoided and how I'd avoided them. I felt rather like Chance the Gardener, and not for the last time.

-from "Discipline and Theory" in Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics

Nancy Welch

"Through this particular experience [with conflicting theories of composition instruction in two graduate programs] — one that has indeed been assumption shaking and identity-changing for me — I want to argue for an understanding of the growing critical consciousness and pedagogical change that arie from resisting, not embracing, a [theoretical] faith."

Nancy Welch, "Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance, and the Training of Teachers." College English 55:4, April 1993, 387-401.

Recall

Frank Lentricchia

"About ten years ago, I stopped reading literary criticism."

"You tell yourself that what you remember will silence the Devil for good, who wants you to become abstract, because abstraction is the stuff of his kingdom. The Devil of Theory: you know him well"

From The Edge of Night: A Confession Knopf, 1994. (110)